

Martin O'Malley
Governor

Anthony Brown
Lt. Governor

Theodore Dallas
Secretary

May 31, 2012

Nettie Anderson-Burrs, Chairperson
Citizens Review Board for Children
4201 Patterson Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21215

Dear Ms. Anderson-Burrs:

As you are aware, the CRBC submits quarterly reports to the Social Services Administration providing details on the reviews done by local boards. We utilize the reports to assess adherence to current policies, identify gaps in policy and provide feedback to LDSS management. We post the reports on SSANet for local department review. I wanted to take this opportunity to let you know of the policy work being done that addresses recommendations made in the 2nd quarter report.

The reviews highlight a need to do a better job of preparing youth who exit our system due to age rather than reunification, adoption or guardianship. We agree that this population is especially vulnerable when they leave our care without the proper foundation to enable them to live independently. This is also a priority for Secretary Dallas. DHR's Ready by 21 initiative focuses on ensuring that youth leaving our care are adequately prepared thru the provision of work and education opportunities. SSA's Youth Matter initiative focuses on youth involvement and the development of meaningful connections. Youth Matter has been initiated in Prince Georges, Somerset, Wicomico and Worcester Counties with plans to replicate statewide by end of FY13. Our benchmark policy which sets out specific goals to be achieved at specific age ranges has been incorporated into regulation.

Concurrent planning is an ongoing issue for our local departments. We are in the process of completing a comprehensive review of the way we institute concurrent planning. We have been working with the National Resource Center, our judicial partners and local departments. We anticipate issuing a new policy within the next few months.

We agree that early identification of an adoptive resource is vital to reducing the time it takes a child to be adopted. Towards that end, we are developing an adoption manual to guide our staff and ensure that appropriate steps are taken to finalize permanency plans as quickly as possible. AdoptUSKids will be utilized as Maryland's sole adoption registry, reducing duplication and easing the matching process. We have planned a number of trainings and adoption matching events to improve the communication between local departments and provide a forum to match children with waiting families from different jurisdictions.

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I appreciate the work done by the CRBC and the vital information that is provided by the case reviews. I am confident that the work we are doing at the central and local level will have a positive impact on cases reviewed by your volunteers. I look forward to our continued collaboration as we strive to meet the goals of safety, permanence and wellbeing for every youth in our system.

Sincerely,



Carnitra D. White
Executive Director
Social Services Administration